

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 DEAE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 JUSE-00

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SNM-02 SY-10 TRSE-00 USIA-15 NSC-10

SCI-06 OMB-01 SS-20 HEW-08 DODE-00 L-03 AID-20 AGR-20

DRC-01 /156 W

----- 077209

R 010605Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7747

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR, BM

SUBJECT: ONE WEEK OF BURMA'S NEW NARCOTIC DRUGS LAW

REF: RANGOON 0484

1. SUMMARY: THE FIRST WEEK AFTER THE FEBRUARY 20
PROMULGATION OF BURMA'S NEW NARCOTIC DRUGS ACT WITNESSED
DAILY NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS COMMENTING ON
ALL ASPECTS OF THE LAW, AND CALLING ON ALL TO OBEY
THE LAW AND ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS ENFORCEMENT.
THE FERVOR HAS HELD UP THUS FAR COMPLEMENTED BY A NUMBER
OF SEIZURES AND ARRESTS, WARNINGS TO VIOLATORS, AND THE
BEGINNINGS OF THE REGISTRATION AND TREATMENT OF ADDICTS.
END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE WEEK SINCE PROMULGATION OF NEW NARCOTIC DRUGS
ACT, LOCAL NEWSPAPERS DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE SPACE TO
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ARTICLES, EDITORIALS, AND COMMENTARY ON SUBSTANCE OF LAW,

WHAT IT MEANS TO BURMA, ITS BACKGROUND, AND RESULTS
THUS FAR. COLUMNISTS HAVE NOTED THE SEVERE PENALTIES
INCORPORATED IN THE LAW, MARKING ESPECIALLY THE DEATH
PENALTY FOR CERTAIN SERIOUS INFRACTIONS, AND THEY HAVE PINNED
A TAG OF VERY GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE LAW BECAUSE OF THE
SEVERITY OF IT. YOUTH ARE PARTICULARLY TASKED WITH
PARTICIPATING AND ASSISTING THE GOVERNMENT IN ENFORCE-
MENTS, CONCENTRING THEIR EFFORTS IN SHCOOLS, WARDS, STREETS,
TOWNS, FACTORIES, AND MILLS -- WHICH CAN BE INTERPRETED AS
AN ADMISSION OF THE PERVASIVENESS OF THE DRUG PROBLEM IN
BURMA. POLLYANA-LIKE, SEVERAL COLUMNISTS BELIEVE AN
ALL-OUT EFFORT WILL ERADICATE THE NARCOTICS MENACE WITHIN
THREE TO FIVE YEARS.

3. SEIZURES AND ARRESTS OF DRUG OFFENDERS IN URBAN
CENTERS -- A REGULAR OCCURRENCE, BUT MORE SENSATIONAL
BECAUSE OF HARSH NEW PENALTIES -- HAVE CONTINUED WITH
NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS CITING SPECIFIC SECTIONS OF NEW ACT
VIOLATED. THUS FAR, OVER FORTY KILOGRAMS OF RAW OPIUM
HAVE BEEN SEIZED AND EIGHT OFFENDERS ARRESTED IN RANGOON
AREA SINCE NEW LAW IN EFFECT. MEANWHILE, MANDALAY POLICE
OFFICIALS CALLED IN OPIUM SMOKERS AND OPIUM DEN OWNERS,
ALREADY VIOLATORS OF PREVIOUS DRUG LAWS, AND WARNED THEM
TO CEASE THEIR ILLEGAL PRACTICES, BUT OFFERED ASSISTANCE
IN TAKING UP NEW WAY OF LIFE. MANDALAY ADDICTS,
ESTIMATED AT 2000 BY MANDALAY NEWSPAPER HANTHAWADDY,
WERE URGED TO REGISTER AND UNDERGO TREATMENT AS REQUIRED
BY NEW LAW.

4. HEALTH MINISTRY HAS ANNOUNCED INTENTION OF OPENING
MORE HOSPITALS FOR DRUG TREATMENT; HOWEVER, FOREIGN
EXPERT OBSERVERS HAVE COMMENTED ON PRESENT LACK OF
FACILITIES. LARGEST TREATMENT CENTER IS LOCATED AT
TADAGALE MENTAL HOSPITAL IN RANGOON WHICH HAS LESS THAN
150 BEDS AVAILABLE FOR DRUG ABUSE TREATMENT. THREE
OTHER CENTERS LOCATED IN UPCOUNTRY URBAN AREAS HAVE BEEN
DETERMINED AS BELOW NEEDS, YET A START. SOME UNFDAC FUNDS
WILL EVENTUALLY BE CHanneled IN THIS DIRECTION, BUT ARE
GEARED PRIMARILY TO IMPROVING EXISTING FACILITIES. ONCE
THE STIGMA OF REGISTERING ONESELF OR A RELATIVE AS
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A DRUG ADDICT IS OVERCOME, TREATMENT CETERS WILL FAST
FALL BEHIND THE DEMANDS OF THE LAW. THIRTY NEW ADDICTS
HAVE REGISTERED AT TADAGALE IN THE FIRST TWO DAYS SINCE
OPENING FOR REGISTRATION.

5. COMMENTING ON REHABILITATION PROBLEMS, DR. GUTTUSO
(WHO REPRESENTATIVE LONG EXPERIENCED IN BURMA) SAID
THAT FAMILIAR SOCIETIES OF THIS UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY ARE

BLESSED TO THE EXTENT THAT CLOSE-KNIT CHARACTER OF FAMILY LIFE LIKELY TO FACILITATE ADDICT'S RECOVERY AND RETURN TO NORMAL LIFE.

6. EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS STRUCK SEVERAL NOTES. ONE IS TO ENCOURAGE ADDICTS TO REGISTER, IMPORE PEOPLE TO ASSIST GUB IN ERADICATING DRUGS, ETC. SOME COMMENTS HAVE TENDED TO MINIMIZE PROBLEM. ONE ARTICLE CLAIMED 500,000 HEROIN ADDICTS IN U.S. AND 300,000 IN THAILAND, STATED NUMBER IN BURMA UNKNOWN, BUT ACKNOWLEDGED 2000 IN MANDALAY -- BURMA'S SECOND LARGEST POPULATION CENTER. ANOTHER REMARKED JINGOISTICALLY THAT NEW DRUG LAW WILL "DESTROY THE CAPITALIST GERMS OF GENOCIDE WITHIN THE SOCIALIST STRUCTURE AND GUARANTEE THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHY AND STRONG SOCIALIST BABIES."

7. LENGTHY COLUMN IN KYEMON BY LEADING LEFTIST COMMENTATOR ZAWANA BLAMED DRUG PROBLEM ON OUTSIDE INFLUENCES. ADDICTION OF U.S. TROOPS IN VIETNAM WAS PROMINENTLY MENTIONED AS CAUSE FOR INCREASED PRODUCTION OF HEROIN. ALSO NOTED WAS THAT OPIUM ORIGINALLY CAME FROM YUNNAN. THE COLUMN CLAIMED THERE ARE SEVEN HEROIN REFINERIES IN VIENTIANE AND HEROIN OPENLY SOLD IN THAT CITY.

8. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS FEBRUARY 26, U PYI SOE (DIRECTOR GENERAL, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AFFAIRS, FOREIGN MINISTRY) COMMENTED ON NEW ACT. HE REMARKED THAT QUIET BUT STEADY EFFORTS OF U.S. AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES, BEGINNING IN 1971, HAD AWAKENED GUB TO REALIZATION THAT IT WAS "SEVERAL YEARS BEHIND" REST OF WORLD IN PERCEPTION OF NARCOTICS DANGER. PYI SOE ADDED THAT NEW ACT WAS PROMULGATED BEFORE MARCH 2 LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INAUGURATION OF NEW PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY PARTLY BECAUSE OF CONCERN THAT ITS SEVERE PENALTIES AND COMPULSORY REGISTRATION FEATURES MIGHT AROUSE OPPOSITION THERE. CHARGE TOOK OCCASION TO EXPRESS USG SATISFACTION AT NEW ACT AS FURTHER SIGN OF PROGRESS IN GUB ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS. LACEY

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